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Hepcats

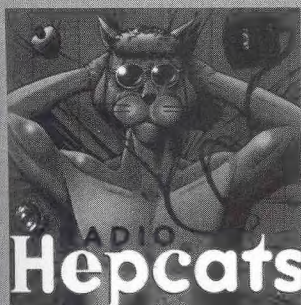
NUMBER 3 FEBRUARY 1997



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get it here

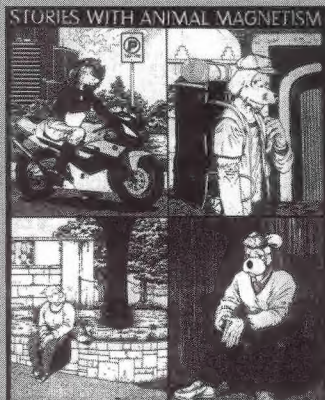
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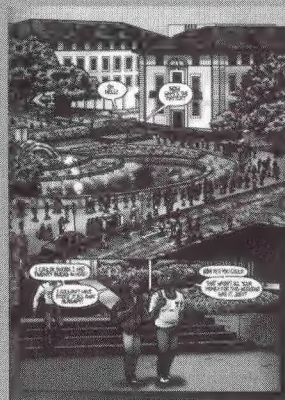
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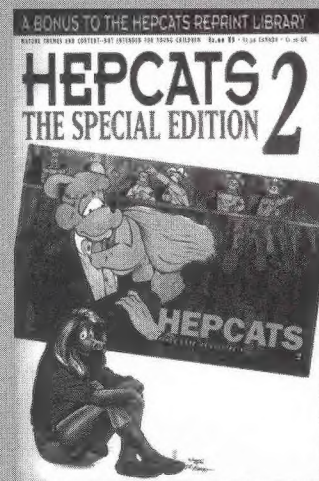
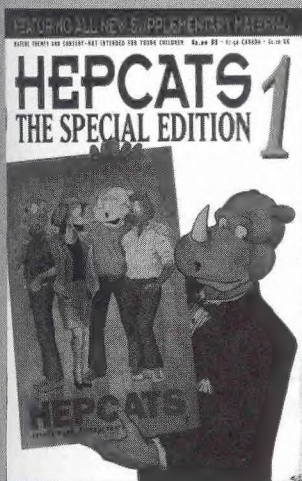
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Antarctic Blast

FEBRUARY 1997

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(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

AP RELEASES FOR
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Warrior Nun: Black and
White #1
Shotgun Mary: Blood Lore #1
Addam Omega #1
Judgment Pawns #1
Matter Baby #1
The Amazing Adventures of
Professor Jones #4
Box Office Poison #3
Fantastic Panic v2 #10
Furlough #50
Gold Digger #34
Hepeats #3
Lillith: Demon Princess #3
Luftwaffe 1946: Triebflugel
Magical Mates #8
No No UFO #1 (Venus title)
Melly Feeling #4 (Venus title)

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BY HERB MALLETTE

I was listening, the other day, to David Bowie's excellent album *The Man Who Sold The World*, and it occurred to me how comfortable we've all gotten about the future. If popular entertainment is any indication, there was a time when the future really spooked people. I'm thinking of songs like Bowie's "Savior Machine," movies like *Soylent Green* and *A Clockwork Orange*, nonfiction books like Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* . . . in past decades, the popular images of the future dwelt on computers taking over the world, people being overwhelmed by technology, and cultural trends that moved at hyperspeed, far beyond our ability to keep up with them and maintain a stable society.

And you know what? It all happened, and now nobody cares.

We've got computers in our cars, computers in our grocery stores, computer networks tied into our televisions. Computers are used to color old movies, new cartoons, and of course, comic books. Every time you turn around, there's a new social trend — right to life, animal rights, right to die, right to be assisted in dying, porn on the internet, TV ratings systems, you name it. We take it all in, digest it or ignore it, and move on. And when next year's generation of computer chips, video games and social issues comes out, we'll do

the same thing all over again.

Okay, Herb, you're saying, but what the heck does all this have to do with comics?

Well, in the comics industry right now, everybody is afraid of the future. Capital City went out of business. Marvel is bankrupt. Sales are dropping. *The end of the direct market for comics could be right around the corner!*

Nope. The future is here. Comics are more diverse than they've been in a couple of decades. Marvel and DC have been toppled as the twin monoliths of the industry. With more companies, newer companies, and a changing distribution dynamic, comic book trends are starting to match the lightning pace of other entertainment industries. We just have to get used to it.

The future isn't just about the passage of time; it's about change. If you're able to accept and live with change, there's nothing to worry about. If you're not . . . well, the last line of Bowie's album is, "So softly, a supergod dies."

Timeless immortals die all the time in comics. But comics themselves go on.

Herb Mallette

p.s. You really should get that album. It's way cool.

Hepeats #3, February 1997, is published by the Antarctic Press, 7272 Wurzbach, Suite #204, San Antonio, TX 78240. FAX#:(210) 614-5029. Hepeats TM and ©1997 Martin Wagner. All other material is TM and copyright ©1997 Antarctic Press. No similarity to any character(s) and/or place(s) is intended, and any similarity is purely coincidental. Nothing from this book may be reproduced without the express written consent of the authors, except for purposes of review or promotion. "A man said to the Universe, 'Sir, I exist!' 'However,' replied the Universe, 'the fact has not created in me a sense of obligation.'"—Stephen Crane. Print run: 7000. Printed by Brenner Printing, San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.

Hepcats Snowblind

CREATED, WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED BY
MARTIN WAGNER

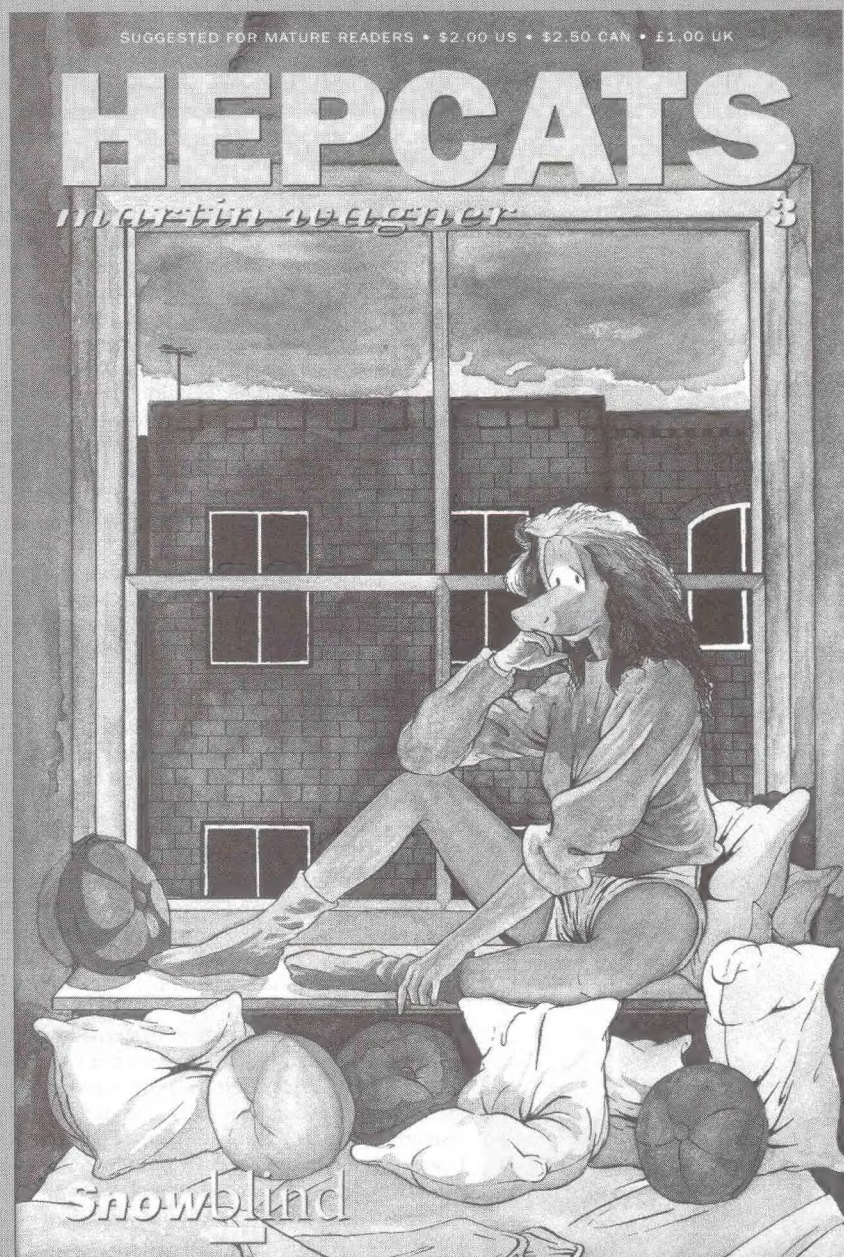
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY
DOUBLE DIAMOND PRESS, OCTOBER 1989

WAY OF THE WORLD PROLOGUE
DRAWN AT RHINOCEROS STUDIOS,
AUSTIN, TEXAS, JANUARY 1997

ISSUE NUMBER 3
FEBRUARY 1997

Chapter 1

The Pavilions of Memory



ANTARCTIC PRESS
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

HEPCATS 3

CREATOR'S COMMENTARY TO 1997 EDITION

(These introductions are provided by Martin Wagner as exclusives to the Antarctic Press reprints of *Hepcats*' first 12 issues. We recommend you read them after reading the story, so as to avoid spoilers.)

The beginning of *Snowblind* startled a lot of people, particularly those who had been following *Hepcats*' run as a college daily gag strip (which at this point constituted the most loyal readers). The transition from nutty collegiate humor to straight-faced drama didn't set well with many of the folks who were used to seeing things like a fire-axe wielding punk elephant or Gunther falling out of a jetliner. Another thing that alarmed both new and old readers was my brass-balled announcement that I was launching into an 18-issue graphic novel at issue #3. I must confess this was pretty doggone cocky. It helps to have an appreciation of what the comics industry was like in 1989.

The first *Batman* film had been released, and the superhero mainstream was flying high on an industry-dominating sales surge that would peak in 1992-93 and not really die down until 1996. Black and white comics were about as popular as a bad case of salmonella. (Not that there are ever any good cases of salmonella.) Retailers who had a fresh memory of the 1986 speculation boom in black & white comics—which saw literally everyone and his mom self-publishing a comic, most of which were irredeemable crud, although the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* did debut around this time as well—wouldn't touch black & whites with a ten-foot pole wrapped in electrician's tape. The sales patterns for most B&W indies was that of a reasonably strong #1 (*Hepcats* #1 did just over 6,000, though keep in mind that during the 1986 "glut," as it came to be known, many B&W's debuted at well over 30,000), followed by a rapidly descending spiral culminating in the series' death at about issue #5 when pre-orders dipped into the hundreds. *The Eye of Mongombo*, a hilarious series from Fantagraphics that debuted at the same time as *Hepcats* and went on to earn its creator, Doug Grey, a Harvey nomination, petered out after issue #8 (and it was only slated to run 10 issues anyway) because Doug just couldn't see any reason to keep working on it due to the dismal sales. Sad. So many good comics have come and gone since the inception of *Hepcats*, sometimes I really have to stop and think about just how lucky I am.

But back then, I couldn't count on that luck. I simply refused to accept an early death due to industry indifference as an option. I knew I had something good here with *Hepcats*, a comic that could really develop and improve into something truly special if given the chance. So I announced my 18-issue serial with all the arrogance my 23-year-old ego could muster. Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. In a way I was saying, "I'm sticking with this, no matter what happens. Are you willing to stick with me?"

The next several years, as you will read (and as several of you experienced right along with me), were not easy ones. No sirree ma'am. I was to lose my marriage, virtually all of my money, and choice bits of my mind attempting to keep this dream alive, all the while dealing with both the support and the viciousness of the retailers and distributors, and the hostile impatience of fans who couldn't understand why it took me so long to get issues out and why I just couldn't snap my fingers and make the new *Hepcats* appear. But no, I don't regret a second of it, wouldn't take any of it back. Because you see, that's what life is simply all about. You learn the hard way. You do what you have to do and sometimes it all works out, and other times it fails. And when it fails, you get up, dust yourself off, take it for the learning experience it is and start again, because to do anything else is death. Pure and simple. True, there are many experiences I went through during those years I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy, and it's interesting to note the ways my personality has changed since 1989. As I said, it's life, it's an education, and you learn what works for you or you disappear. And despite everything, I, and *Hepcats*, have not disappeared.

Gloat mode off for now. Back to our regularly scheduled programming.

I'll have to get into the bulk of this next issue, but in a nutshell, *Snowblind* was inspired by a need I felt to explore the character of Erica. Of all the major players in the daily strip, Erica, I felt, was the least developed and potentially the most fascinating. *Hepcats* as a daily strip had an overwhelmingly masculine viewpoint, for reasons that are probably obvious. Erica was added when I realized the strip didn't have anything in the way of a prominent female lead. But throughout much of the newspaper run, she served little purpose beyond being Arnie's girlfriend. She needed more meat on her bones, as it were, and I figured, what better opportunity to develop her and figure out who she is than in this exciting new medium of comic books I was now experimenting with!

In my commentary to #4, I'll continue this discussion and explore my inspirations and motivations behind my graphic novel, my impossible dream.

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THE ONLY SUBJECT
I EVER LIKED IN SCHOOL
WAS ENGLISH.

I LIKE READING.
I READ WHATEVER I CAN
GET MY HANDS ON.

ANYWAY, I'VE NEVER FORGOTTEN SOMETHING
ONE OF MY TEACHERS SAID ONCE. IT WOULD'VE
BEEN 10th GRADE 'CAUSE THAT'S WHEN
I RAN AWAY.

SHE SAID ANY GOOD STORY
HAD TO HAVE THREE THINGS
NO MATTER WHAT: A BEGINNING,
A MIDDLE AND AN END.

BUT NOT NECESSARILY
IN THAT ORDER...

I THOUGHT THAT WAS PRETTY WEIRD.

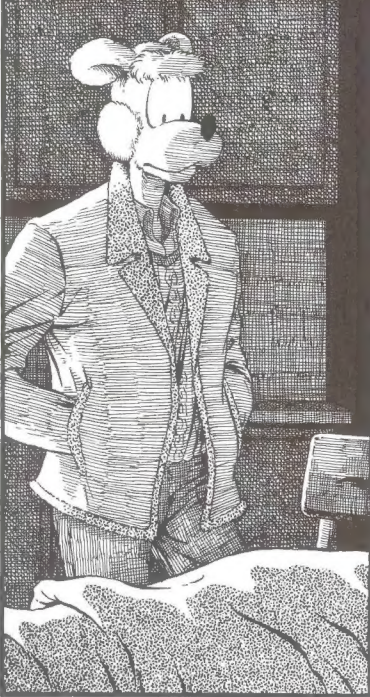
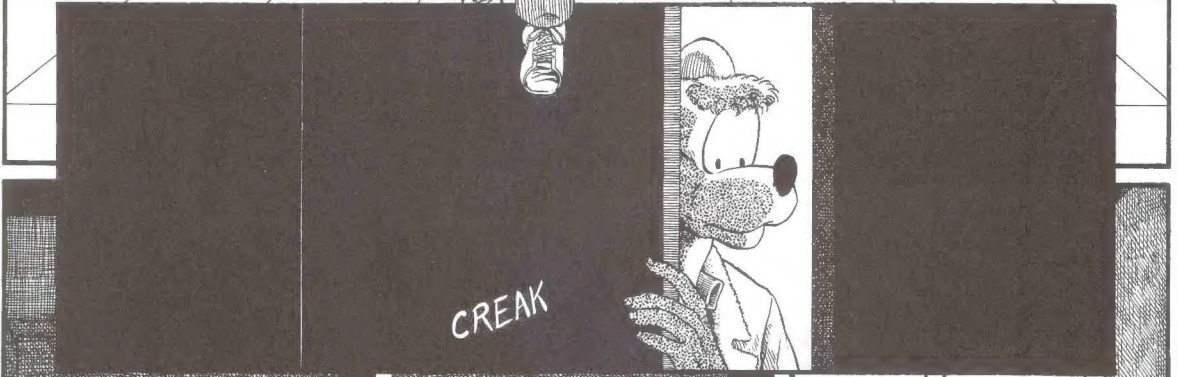
BUT IT MAKES A LOT MORE SENSE NOW.

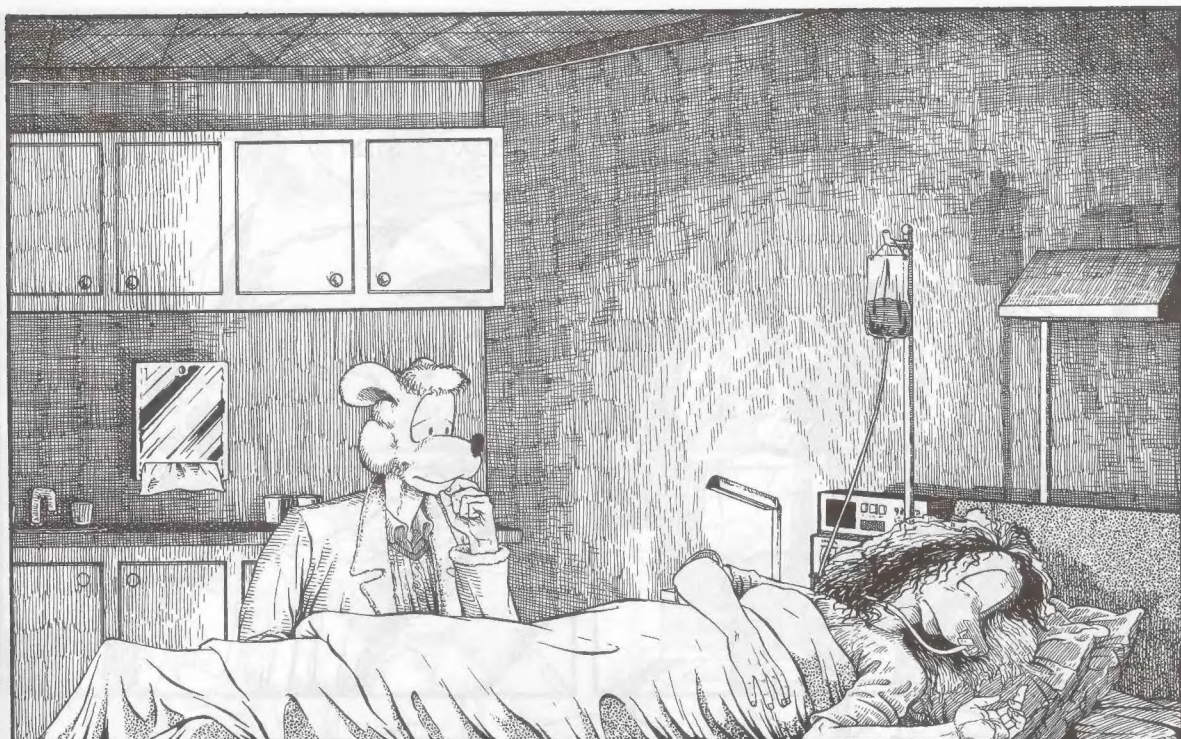
I MEAN, WHEN I THINK ABOUT
THE WAY MY LIFE HAS GONE, IF
I START AT THE BEGINNING,
IT JUST GETS ALL CONFUSED.

SO IF I WANT
TO UNDERSTAND
ANY OF IT...

...I GUESS I'LL
HAVE TO START WITH
WHAT'S HAPPENING
NOW.







ARNIE...

OH, HI, DOC.

ARNIE, I NEED
TO TALK TO YOU
OUTSIDE.

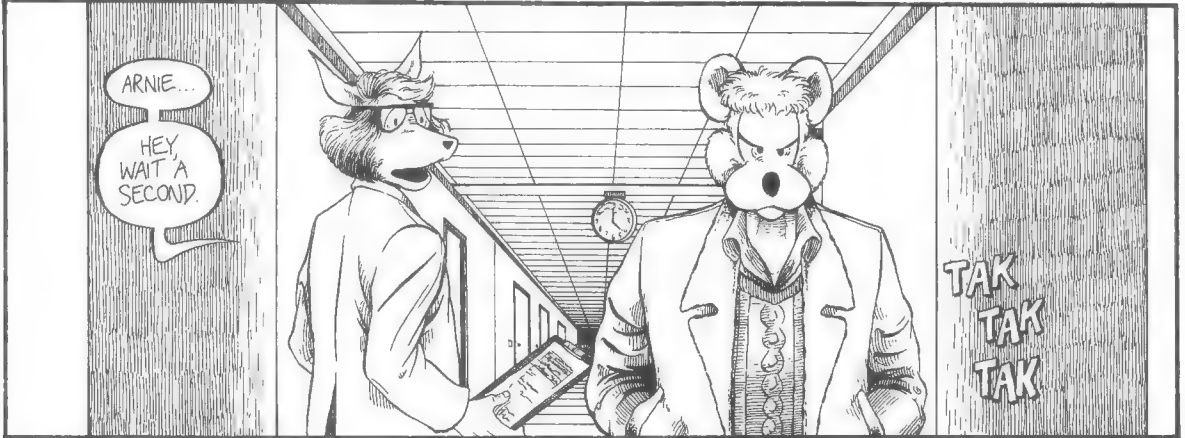
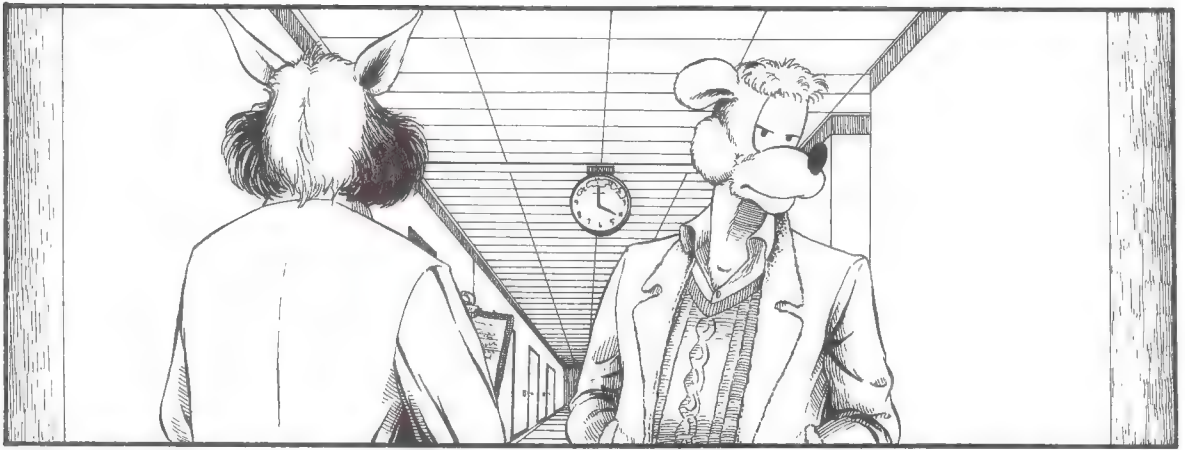
OH...

OKAY.

KLIK







ARNIE, CAN
I BRING YOU SOME-
THING? YOU OKAY?



NO...NO...

I'LL
BE
FINE.

JUST
TIRED.

I JUST WANTED YOU TO
KNOW I WAS CONCERNED...
I DIDN'T MEAN TO...



I KNOW. DON'T
WORRY ABOUT IT....
JUST HELP ERICA.



YOU DON'T WORRY ABOUT
THAT...

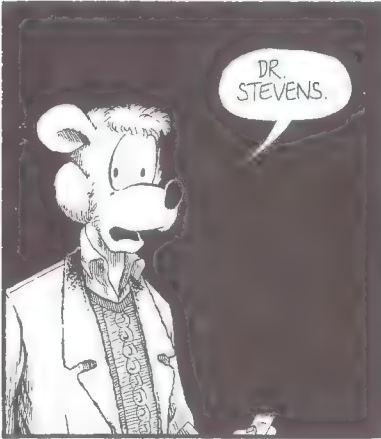


LOOK, TAKE
ONE OF MY
CARDS WITH
YOU...

AND
GET SOME
SLEEP.

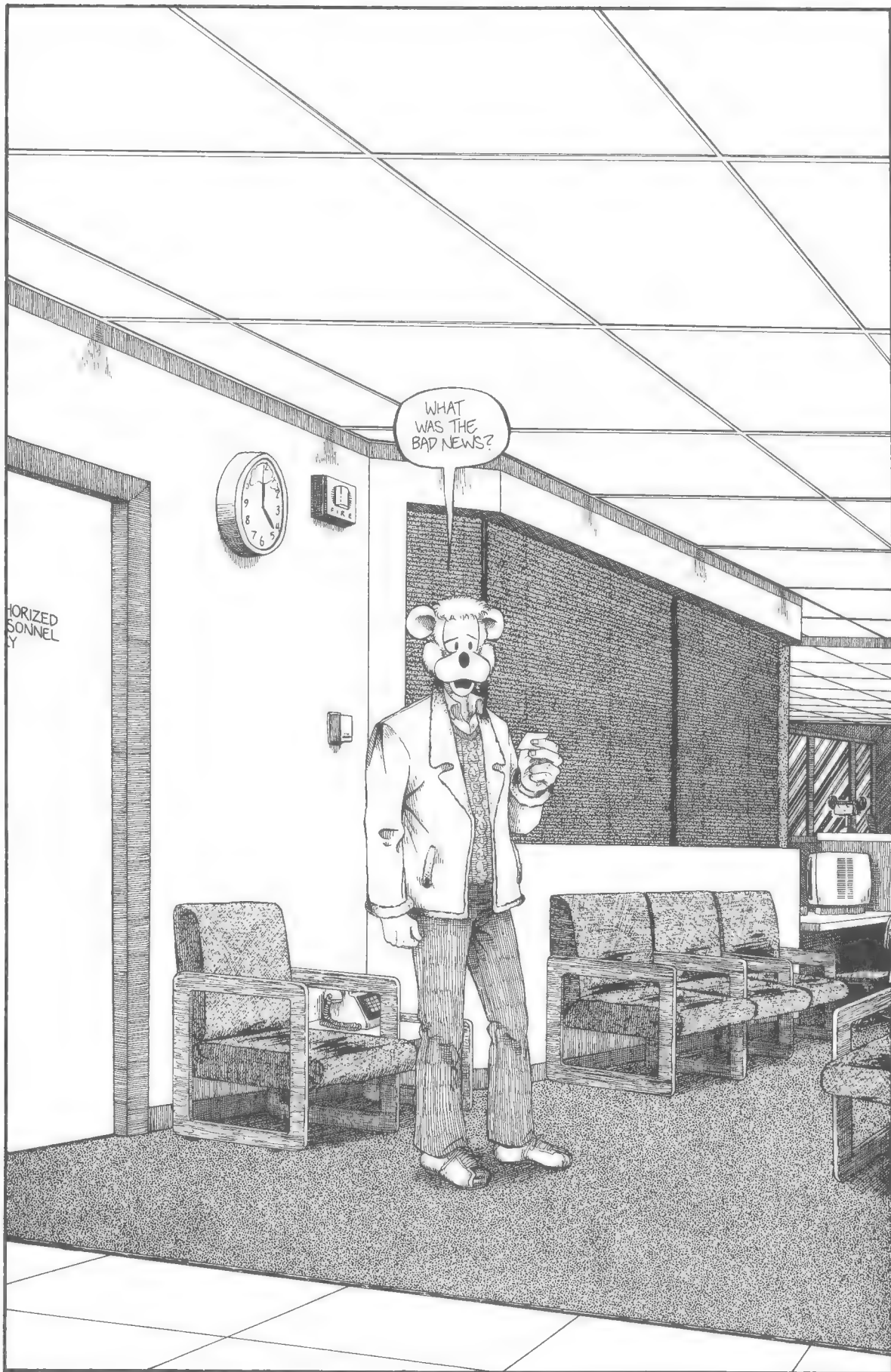


TAK TAK TAK TAK



DR.
STEVENS.





WHAT
WAS THE
BAD NEWS?

HORIZED
SONNEL
Y

OOPS...

SORRY ABOUT THAT.
GUESS WE GOT OFF TO KIND
OF A HEAVY START
THERE.

OH, WELL...

HEY, THIS ISN'T AS EASY AS
IT LOOKS! YOU TRY GOING OVER
YOUR LIFE STORY AND SEE
IF YOU DON'T GET EMBARRASSED!

WELL, LOOK. WHY DON'T WE
SKIP BACK A SHORT WAYS? WE
CAN GO BACK TO—

—WELL—

—THE BEGINNING OF WHAT
GOT ME WHERE I AM NOW.

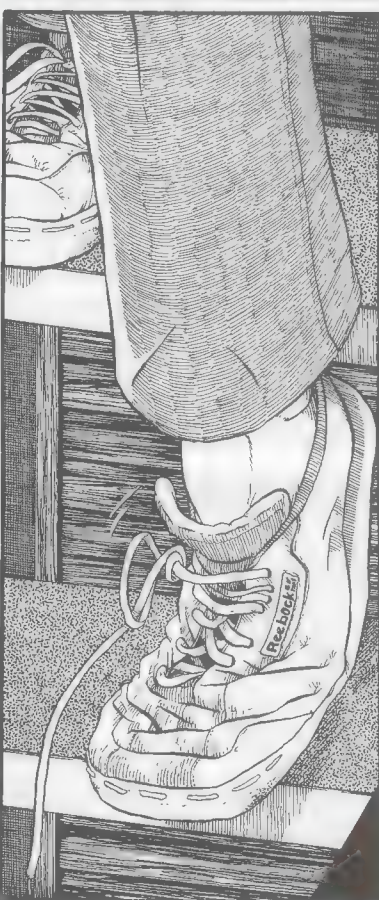
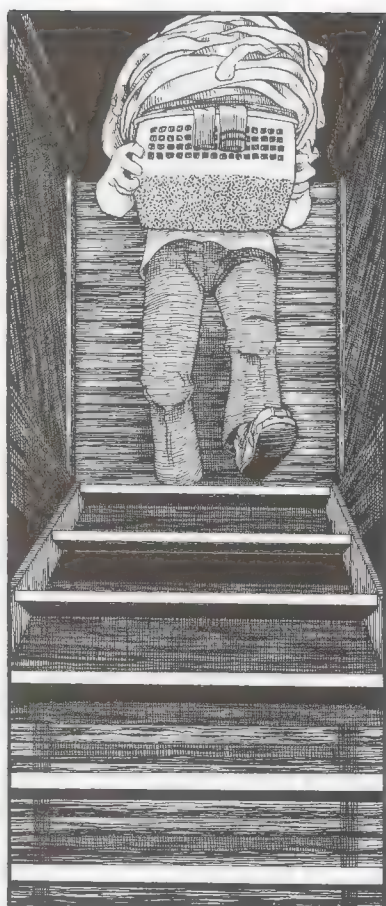
IT SEEMS LIKE A MORE
NORMAL BEGINNING.

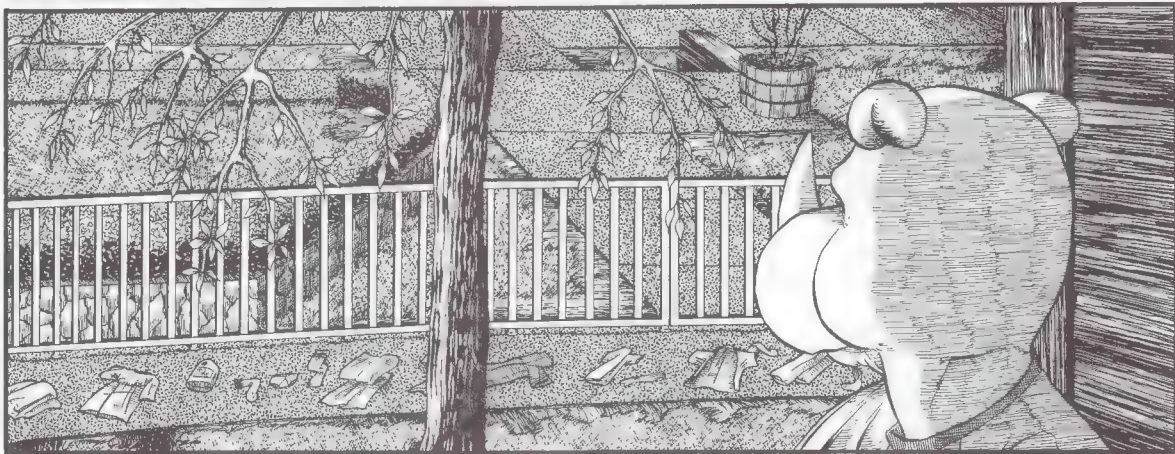
SEE?! I **TOLD** YOU I GET ALL
CONFUSED! I GUESS I GET CONFUSED
NO MATTER WHAT I DO.

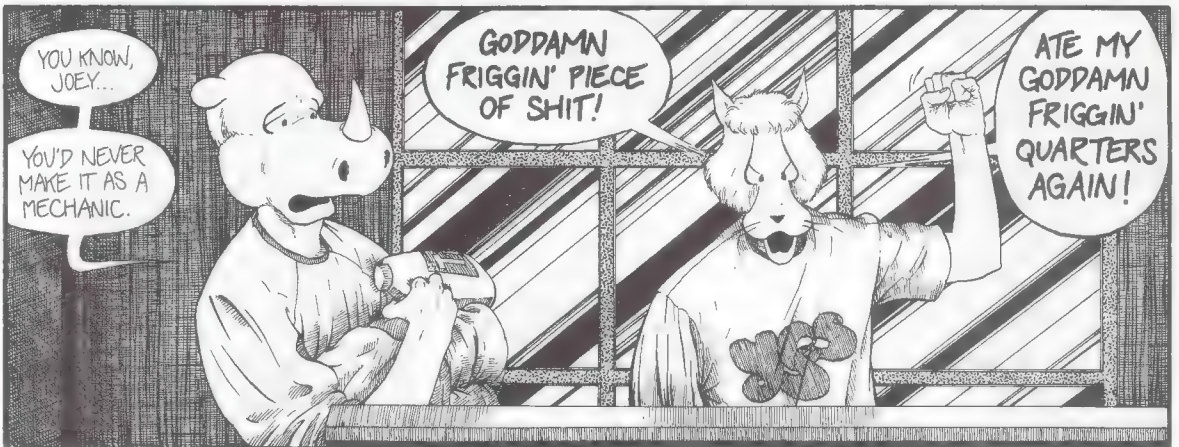
YEAH, I KNOW. WHINE WHINE...BITCH BITCH.

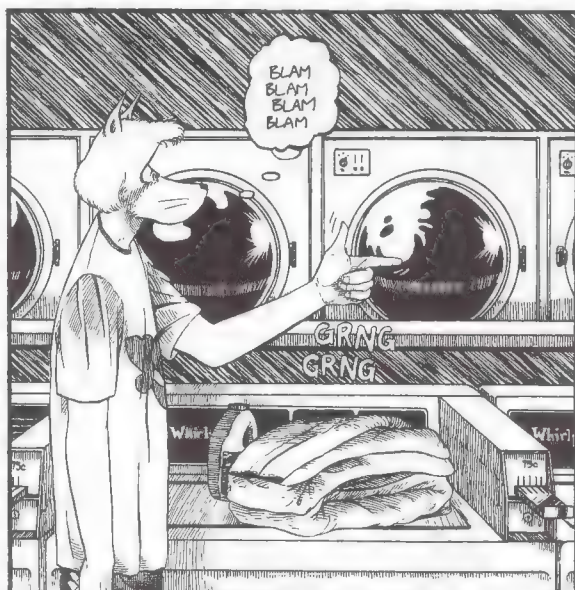
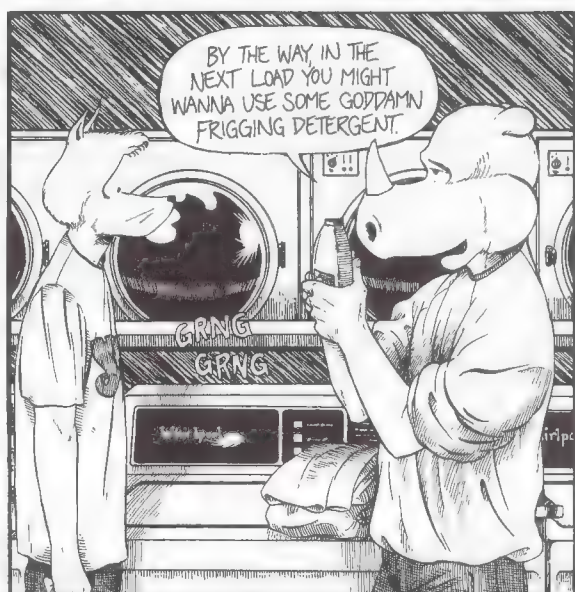
ALL RIGHT ALREADY.
ONCE MORE,
FROM THE MIDDLE!

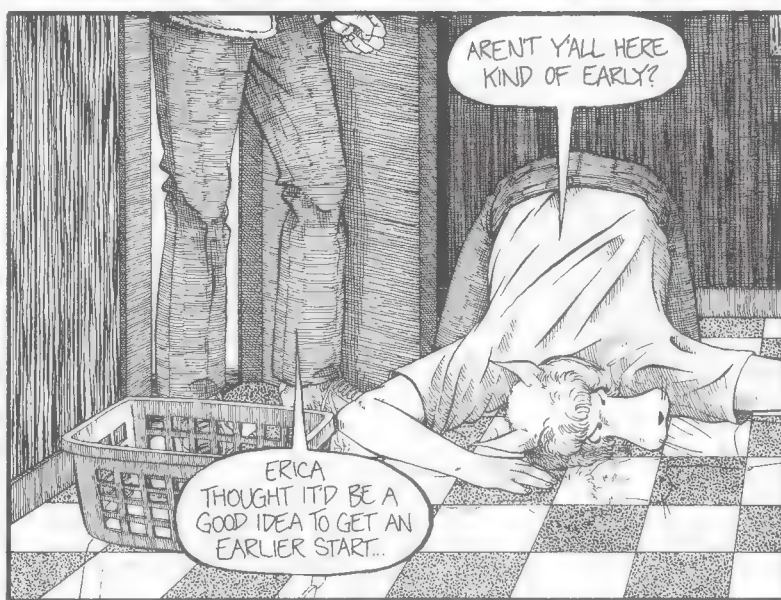
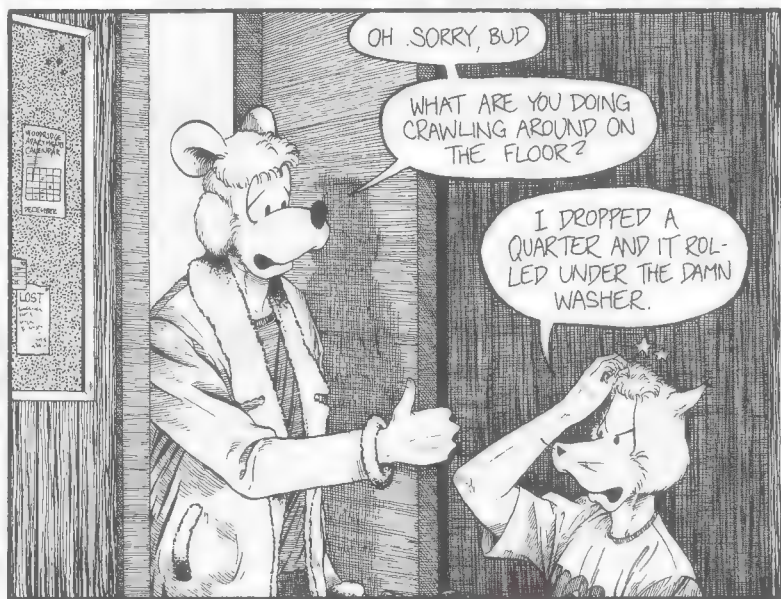
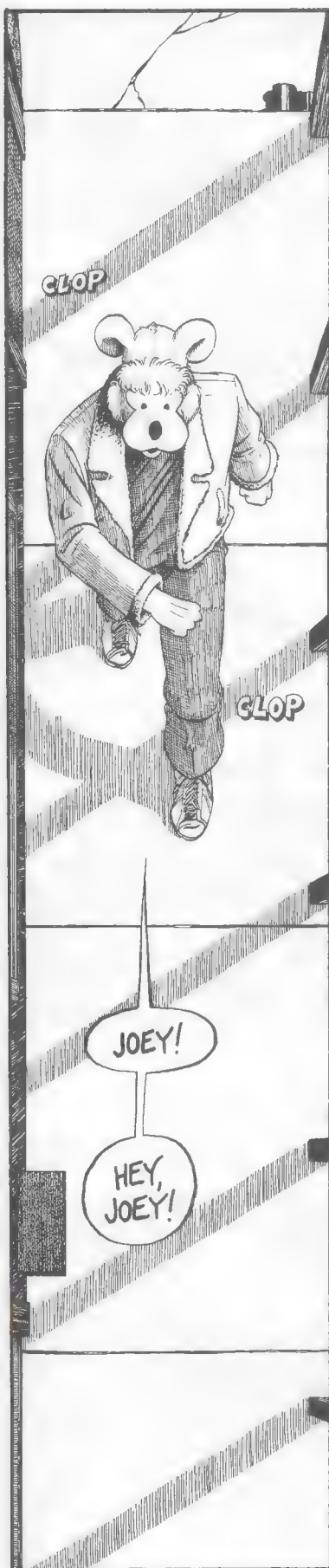






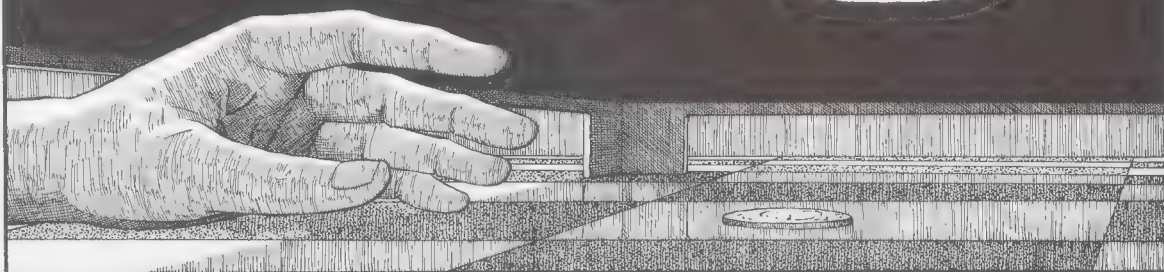






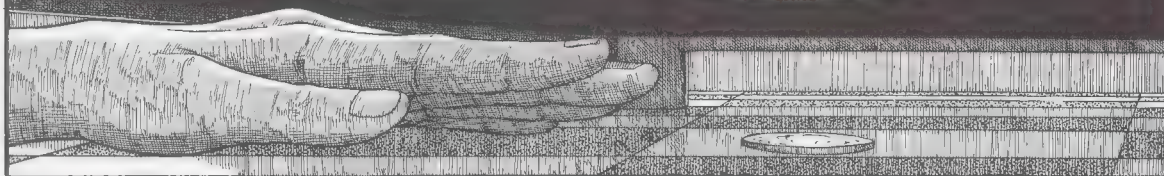
WELL, LISTEN, I
REALLY DON'T THINK I
FEEL LIKE COMING...

AH, COME ON,
JOEY! I NEED YOU
TO COME ALONG!

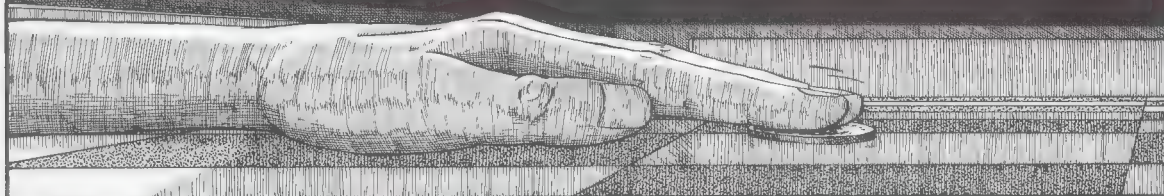


YOU **NEED** ME
TO COME ALONG?

YEAH! I WANT TO SHOW
YOU THE RING I'M GETTING
ERICA. GUNTHER'S GOING TO
BE KEEPING HER BUSY
SO WE CAN HAVE PLENTY OF
TIME TO OURSELVES.

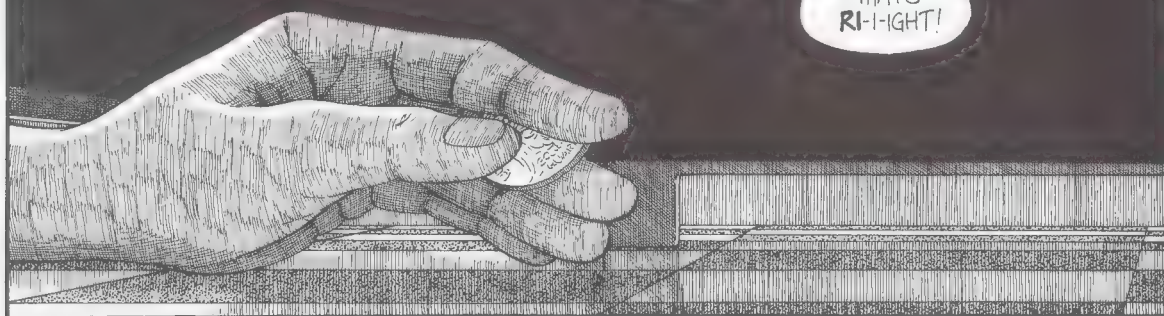


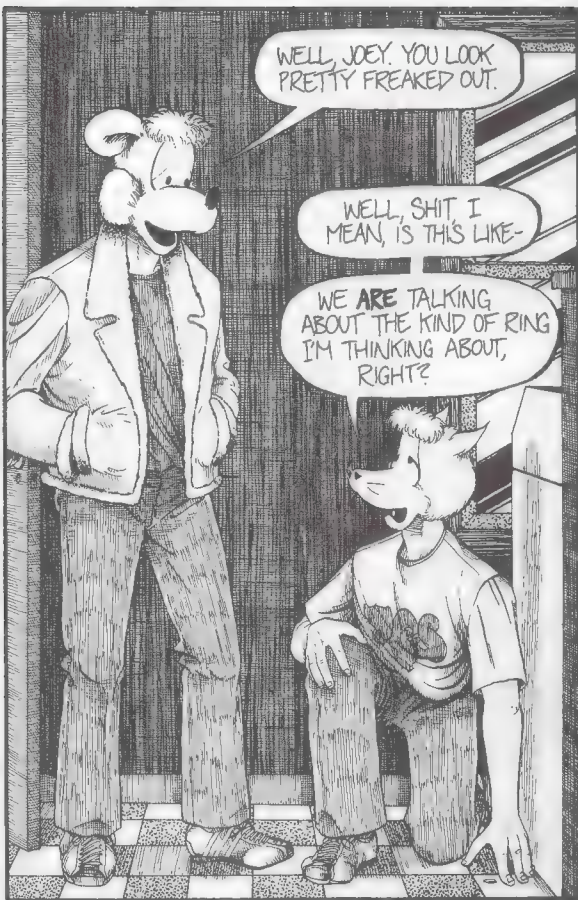
TINK



RING?

THAT'S
RI-I-IGHT!





REALLY,
ARNIE, THIS IS
SOMETHING OF A
MAJOR SURPRISE!

HAVE Y'ALL, LIKE,
SET A DATE YET?

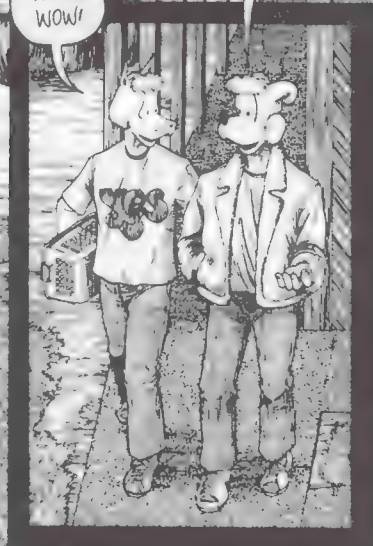
WELL, IT IS
FOR US, TOO, YOU
KNOW...

NO, NOTHING REALLY
FIRM. I'M GRADUATING IN
MAY SO WE WANT TO DO
IT IN THE SUMMER.

OKAY

AND WE WERE GONNA SAVE
GETTING THE RINGS UNTIL VAL-
ENTINE'S DAY, 'COS IT'D BE A SPE-
CIAL TIME TO DO IT... RIGHT? BUT
I THOUGHT I'D SURPRISE HER,
AND GET HER HERS FOR
CHRISTMAS.

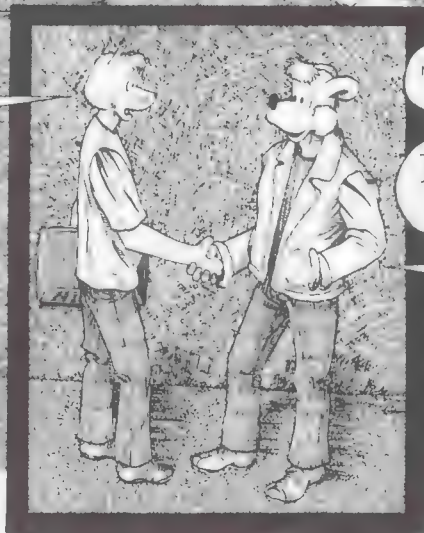
HMM
WOW!

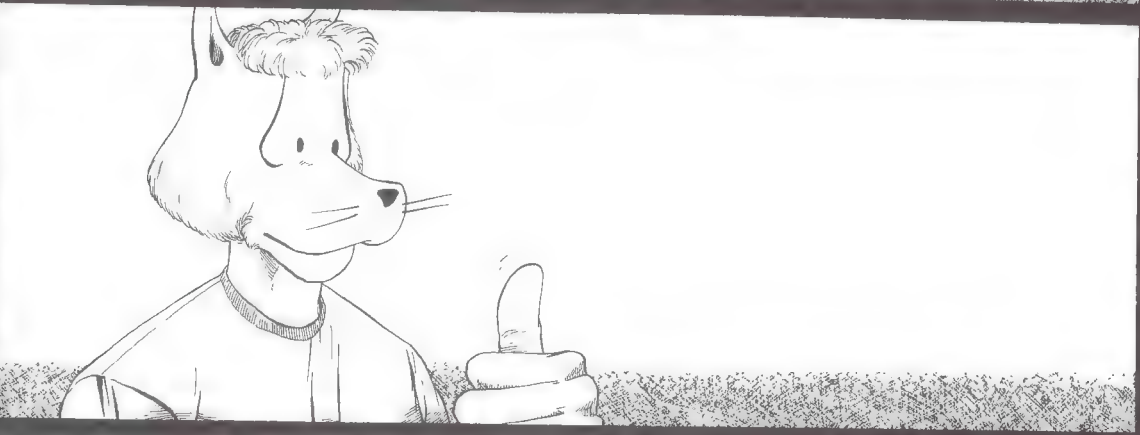


CONGRATULATIONS
MAN... SERIOUSLY!

HEH HEH,
YEAH.

THANKS,
THANKS
A LOT.





SO LIKE I SAID, ABOUT READING...

MY FAVORITE STORYBOOK WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL WAS ABOUT THIS GIRL JUST LIKE ME WHO HAD DREAMS AT NIGHT THAT SHE WAS A PRINCESS IN SOME ENORMOUS PAVILION MADE OUT OF GOLD AND JEWELS AND WITH GREAT BIG CANDY CANES FOR COLUMNS.

ALL HER TOYS WERE THERE AND THEY CAME TO LIFE, AND THEY ALL WENT ON NEATO ADVENTURES.

I KNOW. IT SOUNDS LIKE SOME 'WIZARD OF OZ' RIPOFF. PROBABLY WAS. I DIDN'T GIVE A SHIT. I LOVED IT....

IT WASN'T 'TIL I WAS A TEENAGER THAT I STARTED HAVING DREAMS ABOUT MY OWN PAVILION, EXCEPT MINE WASN'T MADE OUT OF GOLD OR JEWELS OR CANDY.

IT WAS ALL LIKE WHITE TILE.

AND EVERY TIME I TRIED TO GO INSIDE THE DREAM WOULD TURN INTO THIS CRAZY NIGHTMARE AND I'D WAKE UP ON THE FLOOR OR SOMETHING. AND I'D BE FREAKED OUT FOR DAYS.

GOOD GUESS-NO, I NEVER COULD REMEMBER WHAT THE NIGHTMARE WAS.

SO I TOLD MYSELF IT DIDN'T MATTER.

AND THEN I STARTED SAYING **THAT** SO MANY TIMES AND IN SO MANY SITUATIONS I GUESS I STARTED LIVING BY IT: "IT DOESN'T MATTER."

NOTHING MATTERS.



EXCEPT ARNIE.

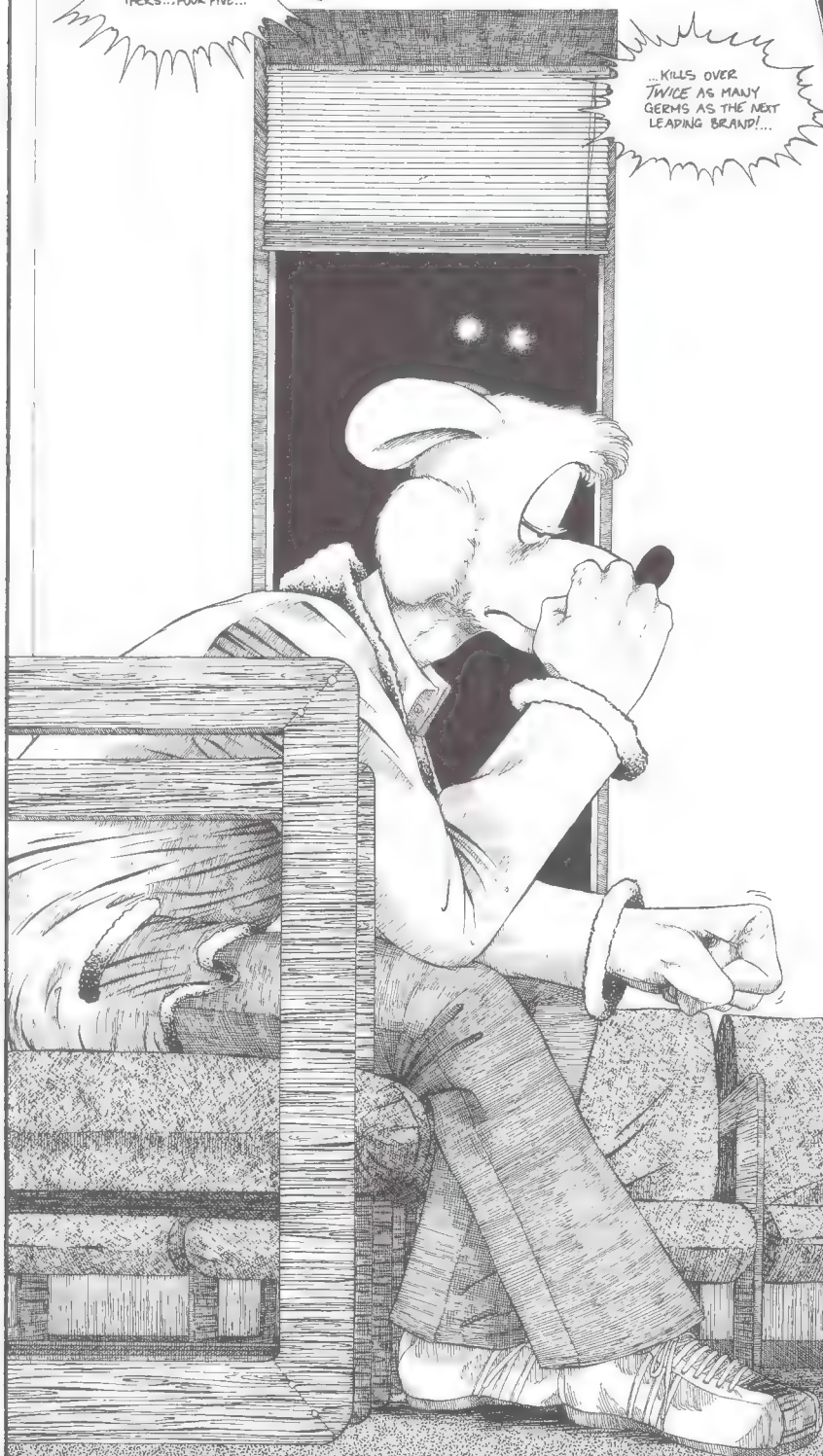
ARNIE MATTERS....



DR. CARRUTHERS...
DR. CARRUTHERS...
PICK UP FOUR-FIVE,
PLEASE... DR. CARRU-
THERS... FOUR-FIVE...

...KILLS OVER
TWICE AS MANY
GERMS AS THE NEXT
LEADING BRAND!...

Snap
KILLS
GERMS



DEAR Hepcats

P.O. BOX 27157
AUSTIN, TX 78755-2157
hepcats@eden.com

First of all, I want to congratulate you for getting *Hepcats* #0 and 1 out. I know I've given you both hell and praise over the past few years, and my preference would still be just to see new issues, but mostly I'm glad to see you doing things again. (And of course, sucker that I am, I'm rebuying the issues, just to keep up on all the latest...).

I never responded to your US Mail poll about what sorts of items *Hepcats* fans would be willing to spend money on, again because of my slowness to actually send anything that requires a stamp. But here's my impression: I like things mostly due to the art, not the utility, so the most attractive things for me are pieces of art—posters, your portfolio print stuff, etc. Most of the things I've mail ordered from comics creators have been posters (Eddie Campbell/Dave Sim's jam poster, James Owen, original art when I can afford it, etc.). So for me, that's your best bet. Though I would like to see prints at a larger size than 8 1/2 x 11. (Not necessarily a huge poster, because I don't actually hang many up anymore, but art is nicest when it's bigger, I think—and it feels less like it could just be a photocopy...)

T-shirts are also something I buy when I like the look and don't feel too much like an advertisement. I never got the Animal Magnetism one because it was too cheesecakey for my fashion sense. I didn't get the more recent one because (1) the artwork wasn't new, (2) the artwork seemed better suited for prints than a T-shirt design to me. In other words, I'm not against T-shirts, I am pretty picky about them. My favorite comics T-shirts are: Paul Pope's Bumble-Buzz shirt, and his HR Watson shirt—part of the appeal to both is that they have nice catchy art, but don't really advertise what they're from. I get more comments on these shirts than any I wear. (Cool! What's that all about!). The other ones I really like a lot are a few of Jeff Smith's Bone shirts. The one with Smiley and a banjo just looking like Smiley (again, no text), and the one with Phoney and the Red Dragon looking each other eye to eye (partially because the colors are very vivid and the scene says a lot in its silence and expressions).

But most of that other stuff—keychains, ashtrays, pens...it just doesn't do it for me. Card sets can be done well, but hardly any are. My two big gripes are: 1) sets that force you to hunt for stuff. I'd rather just buy a box of the complete set and be done with it, and 2) sets that rely too heavily on panel art or previously

published art. My ideal set would have all-new art, and all of it would be done in a poster/splash style, rather than trying to re-tell a story that I've already read, or excerpt from it.

Long note, but hopefully it'll tell you what at least one fan likes.

BRAD CHAMBERLAIN

Yowza, talk about picky! (Just kidding, relax!) Basically you all can see why I don't do more Hepcats merchandising. I'm always confused about what fans might want and so it's very risky to make the decision to drop the green on creating any merchandising. I have, in the past, planned and cancelled posters, prints, card sets, and shirts because of massive indifference—although, today, people do seem to be really responding to the Portfolio Print Sets (so much so I've been too slow getting them all out) and Radio Hepcats. And there does seem to be a lot of buzz circulating about an Erica figure. So I suppose the best guideline to give you all is: you never know what might crop up.

I am confused about one thing, though: how can a picture of Joey in a tuxedo holding a champagne glass be considered "cheesecake"? I mean, Joey doesn't have tits.

Dear Martin,

I am new to the *Hepcats*, but I have fallen in love. I picked them up about two weeks ago and am now a reader for life. I just hope that I will be able to find back issues of this spectacular comic, so I will be able to know what is entirely happening, but even if that doesn't happen, I am still going to pick up *Hepcats* and buy it everytime I see it in the store. I just wanted you to know that I love it and that it is the kind of comic I hope to see around more often. I like how it is just about people, who happen to look like animals, and not about superheroes and manifesting powers like most of the others are. It is refreshing to read *Hepcats* after finishing one of those other comics. Well, I guess that is about it. Keep it up.

Sincerely,

AMY STRICKLING

Hi Martin, I am a comic retailer & just want to tell you that I like your comic. I have carried *Hepcats* & other small & big independent comics for a long time. I have been in business since 1986, & was working in the comic industry for 3 years prior

to that. I want to let you know if there is any way that I can help promote your book, I will. I enjoy this book (this is the 2nd time I've read this story.).

DAVE SCHWARTZ

c/o COMIC COLLECTION
FEASTERVILLE, PA

Dear Mr. Wagner,

Having just read *Hepcats* #0 I thought I should write to you, that and the offer of a free mailing list. Free goodies aside I enjoyed *Hepcats* #0 a lot. It is the first time I have read a comic by yourself, it is safe to say I was impressed. I have known of *Hepcats* for a few years but never picked up any as they are not too easy or cheap to find over here. I ordered #0 as a one-off to sample *Hepcats*. From now on I'll be ordering it monthly and trying to pick up the ones I missed and try to get some of the older ones as well.

I was also very impressed with the colouring. As a budding comic artist (with a bit of luck, skill, and divine intervention) I am very much interested in the technical side of things. If it is possible I would be very grateful if you could share any working practices with me. Such as materials (pens, brushes), how long do you spend on a page to whether you draw from memory, reference or a live model. I look forward to hearing from you.

KRISTOPHER JUSTICE

WHICKHAM
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE
ENGLAND

*I covered my choice of drawing materials in #2's letter column; hopefully you got that. As to the actual process of putting together a *Hepcats* page: there will be a special section devoted to that in the 10th Anniversary Special, which is turning into a much huger project than I anticipated. But keep an eye peeled for it.*

Hello, I'm a new reader of *Hepcats*, issues 0 & 1 are the first I've read, though I will say I'm quite tempted by *Radio Hepcats*. I'm enjoying myself so far, even if these first two stories have been fairly directionless. I'm starting to get a feel for Gunther & Joey, and I'm quickly learning to like them. I am equally looking forward to meeting Arnie & Erica in a fuller sense. You are also building up a good sense of anticipation about the events to come in

Snowblind, please don't print any letters from more seasoned readers that might give anything away! I'd much prefer to let things unfold as you originally told them, and as a *Hepcats* "newbie" I highly appreciate your letting us start from the "beginning."

Telling two stories at once is interesting as well, we are simultaneously seeing both where Joey has been and where he is going, and also seeing both our near future and the recent past. Incidentally, how old are Joey & Gunther at the time of the main story?

Anyway, good luck with the series, and here's hoping AP treats you better than it has their other furry titles—or, at any rate, if they don't, here's hoping someone like Radio Comix comes along to rescue you.

KIT O'CONNELL
(TOD T. FOX)

MARLBOROUGH, NH

In *Snowblind*, the characters are college-aged, in their early 20s, with Arnie the oldest at 23. In *Way of the World*, we move years in the future. Joey is 33 when it starts.

Much of the reason AP dumped its furry titles is not out of any disdain, but because, in these times of hardship for the industry (many publishers, AP included, took an ice-cold bath when Capital City went under and stiffed everyone) they felt it was necessary to scale back to the books that had the biggest growth potential. *Furlough* and *Genus* were not necessarily unprofitable, they just didn't seem to have any real breakout potential beyond furry fandom, and I think AP actually did those books a favor by letting Elin Winkler take them to her own company, where she could continue to give them her full attention.

And I've noticed a lot of the e-mailers this issue have been going under handles. Is e-mail turning into the CB radio of the 90s!? (Heh heh.)

Martin,

First of all let me say I'm a complete *Hepcats* newbie (pity me). I had read a couple of reviews in *Wizard*, and thought I'd give *Hep* a shot. Of course I grabbed H0 when I saw it. I enjoyed it tremendously, and immediately began searching for back issues. The only one I could find was H12, but I've got *Snowblind* on order and I'll be looking for more back issues this weekend at MegaCon.

Needless to say, *Hepcats* had me hooked instantly. Lately, I've been getting bored with the traditional superhero comics. I still buy *X-Men*, but I've got about 3 months worth of unread issues piling up. I started a desperate search for a new type of comic to read. Luckily, I discovered *Hepcats*.

The characters are interesting and easy to relate to. I find myself really caring about what happens to them. I also

love your art. The *X-books* have been turning to this watered down version of *Manga* lately. Finding a comic where the story is great and the artwork is so clean and vibrant is a joy. It's amazing to me how much expression you can put on a 'toon animal's face.

On to a couple of comments about H1. This is the first comic to make me laugh out loud in quite some time. The scene in the bar was great. Specifically, watching Joey's expression change as he gradually becomes more pissed off. Also, the prologue at the end has me impatient to read the next chapter.

I'm sure a good reviewer can find good and bad in any publication. I can't be a good reviewer because I can't find anything negative to say about *Hepcats*. I think I'll stick around for a while and see what happens. Looking forward to much more *Hepcats*.

MARK ROY (DrTrekWolf)

Another superhero fan graduating to the alternative leagues—way to go! I remember, back in 1990 and 1991, telling people how the industry was going to implode because the big publishers only saw fit to publish superhero comics, and sooner or later most of their customers might well outgrow that and look for more challenging material. All those *Marvel* guys just looked at me and laughed. (You all remember *Marvel*, don't you?)

Heyo! Okay, I admit, I'm a newbie, but the fact is, I'm an instant fan. I've already been working on doing fan art (smirk). A couple nights ago I picked up *Hepcats* #0 and on the busride home, it was all I could do to keep from getting off the bus and heading back downtown to get whatever issues I could find of the series. The characters are compelling, something that a lot of comic series' are lacking recently. The storyline is easy to relate to, and they're a lot more believable than some of the *Omaha* stories I've read (I've pretty much read most of the series...), and it's a lot more interesting than *Shanda the Panda*, a story that's overly soap-opera-y. I like your use of reality with anthropomorphic characters. It's really refreshing to see! Anyway, I'll stop gushing and go away (smirk). Au revoir, and hope to talk to you again!

BETH SCHULTZ (NELWYNN)

Be sure and send some of that fan art along when you get done with it, Nelwynn.

Dear Mr. Wagner.

My name is Mike Spring (I go by Spoon) and I am a very big *Hepcats* fan. I am also a retailer, running a small comic store in Orlando, FL called ComicConnection. It is my family business and my Mom and I run it. Anyway, I've been meaning to drop you a line for

while now, but I've just gotten around to it. I don't want to take up too much of your time, so just a few quick questions/comments.

1: I noticed your name on the guest list for the Heroes Con in Charlotte, NC in June. Hopefully, this is correct. If so, will you be selling the Stories With Animal Magnetism shirt there? I hate mail order, and it's not available through Diamond. Bad enough the new T-shirt showed up on my cancellation list, so I'm hoping I'll be able to get this one.

2: I love the new back-up stories! I'm looking forward to the new stuff.

3: Good idea on the upcoming Tenth Anniversary Special. As a retailer, I have a hell of a time getting people to try new comics, especially if there's no spandex involved. Hopefully, I'll be able to snag some new readers with this. The reprints have been real handy with that, as I've gotten about 6 new subscribers for *Hepcats*. (Which is pretty good, we're a small store. Compare the 8 copies I sell of *Hepcats* monthly to the 6 I sell of *Superboy*, or the 8 of *The Flash*. Not too shabby..)

4: THANK YOU for the AWE-SOME packaging design behind the Radio *Hepcats* CD. That was SO much cooler than the crappy little cardboard sleeve they did for the *Warrior Nun* CD. I really enjoyed that, and I am looking forward to vol. 2!

Hey thanks a lot for listening. I am a huge, huge fan and I will continue to do what I can in support of the book. Congratulations on the Antarctic deal, and keep up the good work! I look forward to meeting you in June!

Sincerely,

MIKE SPRING (SPOON)
ORLANDO, FL

It's incredible you're able to sell as many *Hepcats* as you are some of the more mainstream superhero comics. Then again, this all reminds me of exactly how drastically the comics industry, and comics fandom, has shrunk. Back in the early 90's, there were even modest-sized shops selling 25, 50, even 75 *Hepcats*, as well as over 100 copies an issue of *Cerebus*. Nowadays, a retailer thinks he's doing great guns to move more than ten copies of anything. A true shame nice guys like Mike have to put up with that; a dedicated retailer deserves a thriving business.

READER POLL

HEY, WANT AN ERICA FIGURE?

AP and I have been discussing the possibility of producing an Erica figure perhaps in 1998. I'm all for the idea; however, as figures are heart-stoppingly expensive to produce, it would be nice to know if fans would really go for such an item. So drop a line and give your "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" to an Erica figure!

Kicking off the 1997 Summer Convention Season!!!

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Neil Gaiman's appearance benefits the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund



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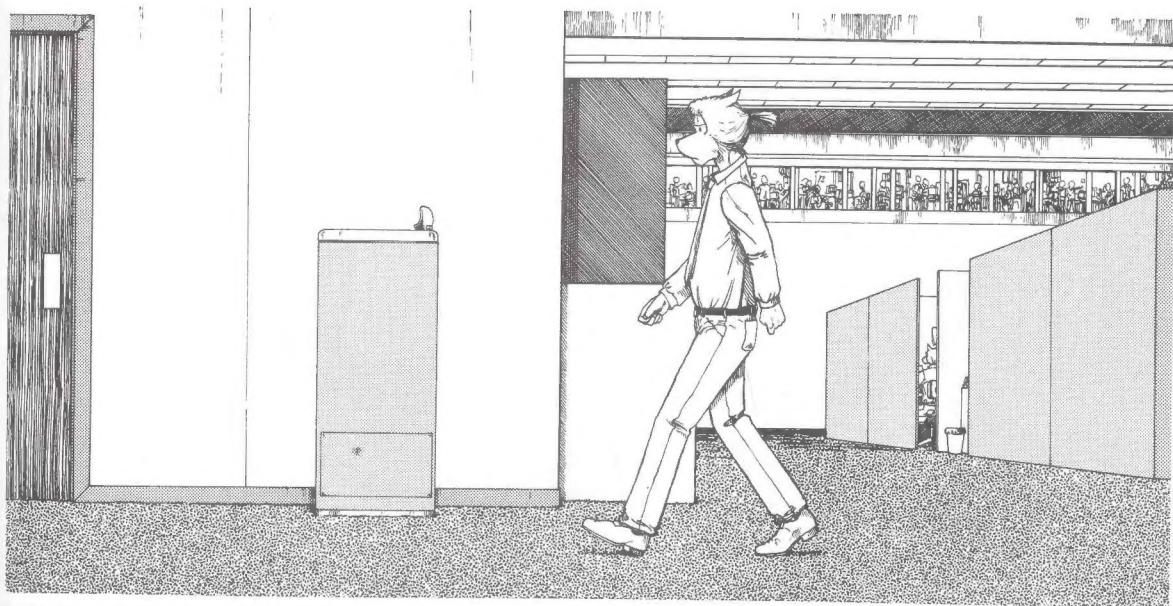
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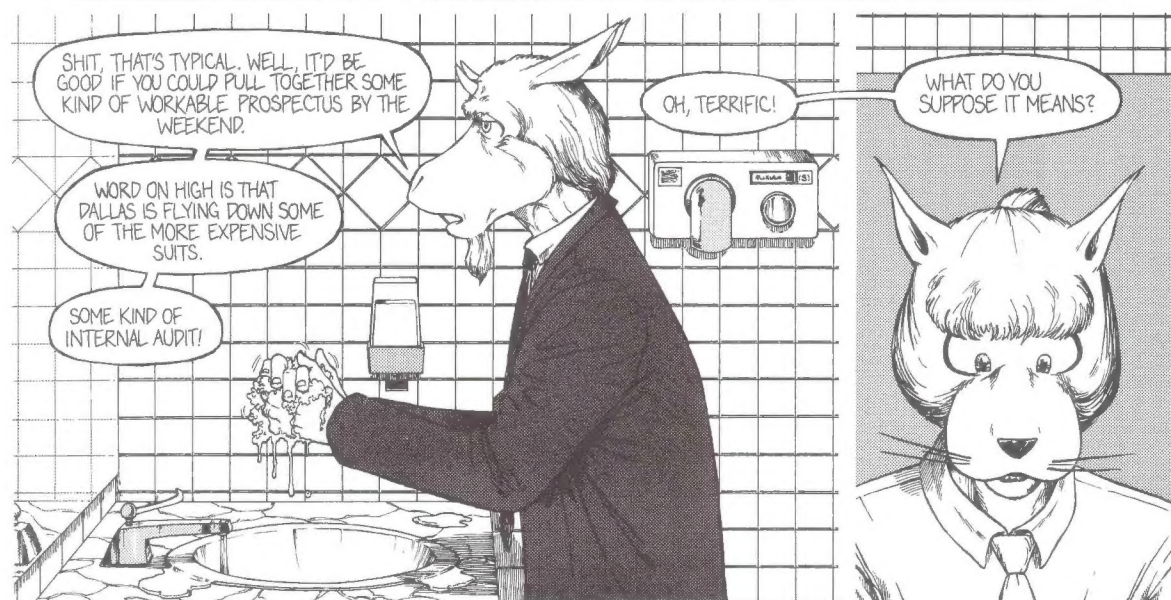
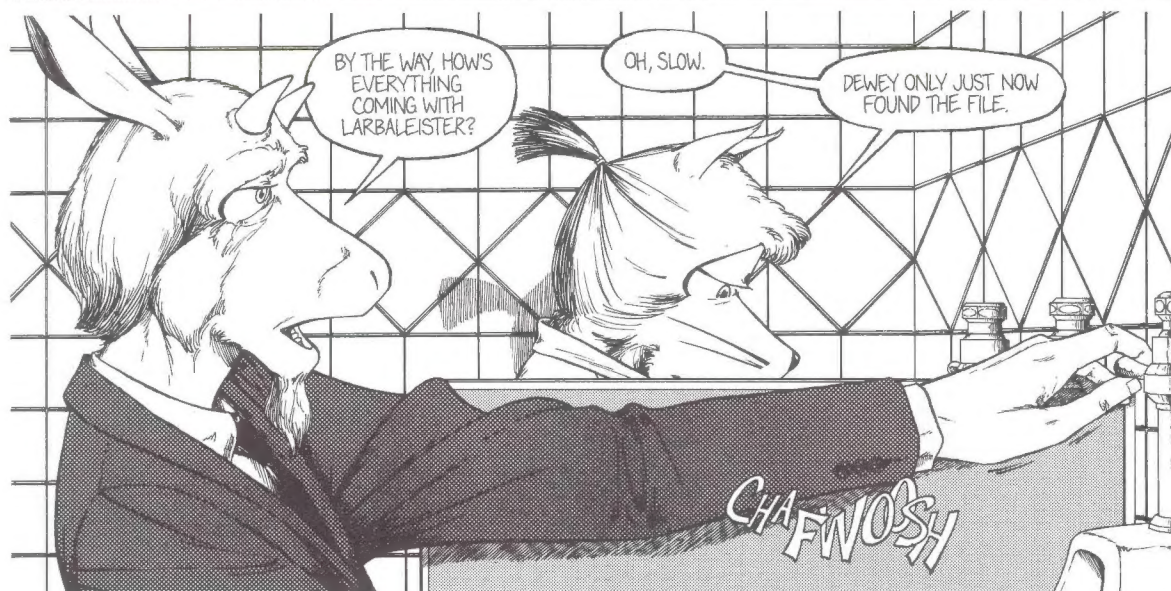
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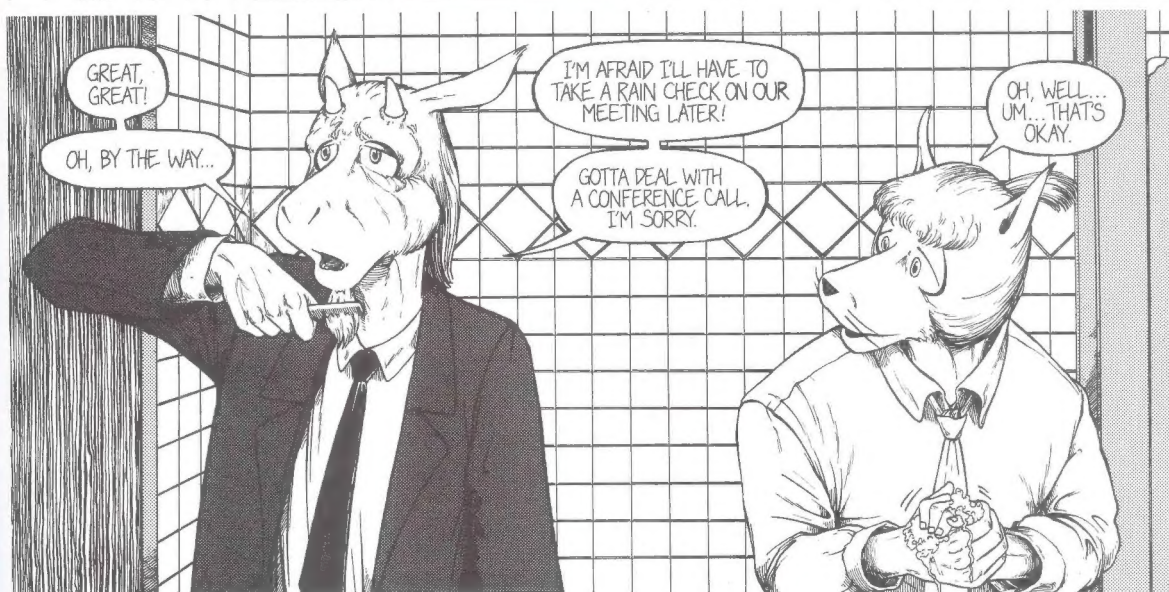
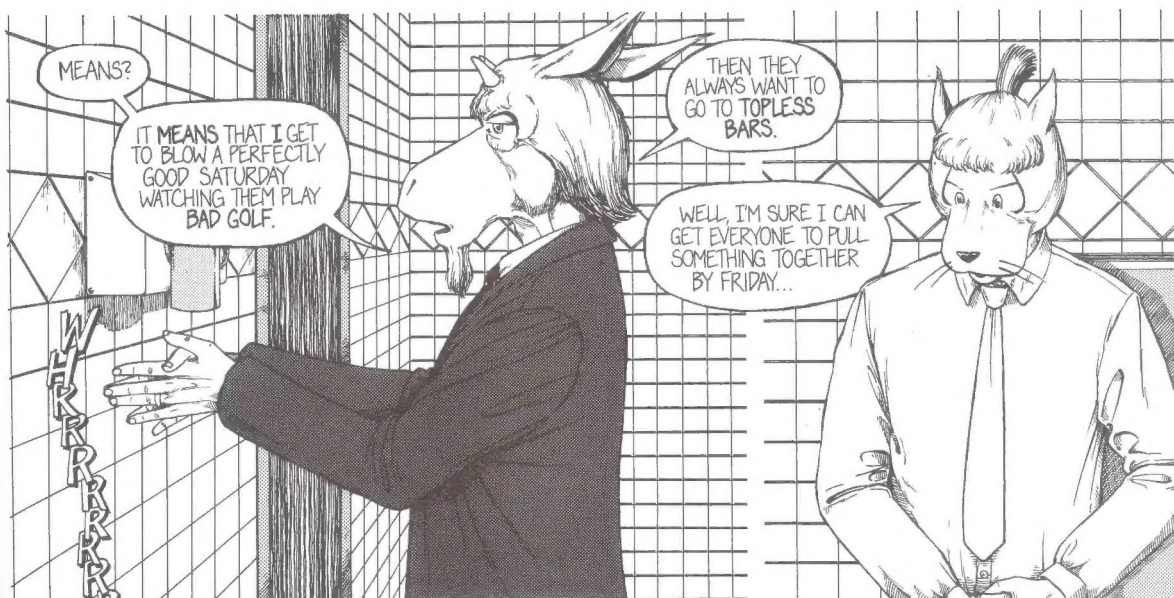


way of THE world

What follows is a 100-page guide to why of the world's next major events graphic novel, a short story that goes into the future and well ahead of July 2, 1997, the college days at the end of the '80s. The book is 100 pages and will be serialized in 4-page chunks in the back of issues 1-12, with the exception of issues 8 and 11. It will also be published in its own edition, 12 December 1997 for the benefit of old friends and new. It is wise to purchase the reprint of issue 1-12 just to obtain the book. The volume will cost you \$20.00 plus \$3.00.







Coogan is a cool boss. That means a lot, I suppose, when you work in the sort of environment I do, the kind of place where everyone talks about how much they like their job, but actually spends most of their workday sporting this glazed look between pure brain-crushing stress and "oh, well, guess I'll never get to do what I really wanted to do with my life" resignation. That's why I wanted to talk with him.

I mean it's not as if I had some sort of obligation to talk to him. I could have just put in my two weeks' notice and said fuck it. But I like Coogan. He's a stand-up guy, like they say in the movies, and he's managed to find that mental niche that allows him to function in this cubicle wasteland without taking it too seriously and letting it get him down or turn him into just another suit. Plus I think he's sort of privately amused by the fact this place pays him so damn much to do work that is, to him, pretty inconsequential. I think one of these days very soon he's going to take early retirement and then write a really poisonous, hilarious novel about this place, and with the royalties off of that he'll spend the rest of his life farting around the Caribbean in a boat that costs as much as two houses. Or not. I'd like to think so. Seems like the kind of thing he'd do.

My desires are a bit more basic and earthy than that. But at the same time they're just loopy enough that I suppose I feel the need for Coogan's blessing, for lack of a better word. I just feel he'd understand, the way Gunther would if he was here right now. In fact, I bet I can guess the first thing Coogan will say to me. He'll say...

B 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

